DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 386 IR 019 517

AUTHOR Carrell, Michael R.; Carlson, Rosemary
TITLE Using Distance Learning To Meet a Rural Mission.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Mid-South Instructional Technology Conference (3rd, Murfreesboro, TN, April 5-7, 1998).
AVAILABLE FROM Web site: http://www.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed98/mcarrell.html
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audiovisual Instruction; Business Administration Education; Computer Assisted Instruction; Course Evaluation; *Distance Education; Educational Technology; Faculty Development; Guidelines; Higher Education; *Instructional Design; *Interactive Television; *Internet; Masters Programs; Program Development; Rural Areas; *Student Attitudes; Student Surveys; Teaching Methods; Training
IDENTIFIERS Compressed Video; Morehead State University KY

ABSTRACT

This paper presents background on distance learning programs at Morehead State University (Kentucky), focusing on the development of the MBA (Master of Business Administration) program. Distance learning faculty training that included use of the technology, pedagogy alternatives, and the basic "Do's and Don'ts" of distance learning is summarized. These basic "Do's and Don'ts" for two-way audio/video and Internet distance learning, developed by several distance learning faculty, are listed. Findings of distance learning surveys that evaluated MBA students' perceptions of compressed video and Internet courses compared to traditional classrooms are discussed. Based on the results of the assessment surveys, it is concluded that students are satisfied with both the technology and the quality of learning. Two figures present survey results. (AEF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

USING DISTANCE LEARNING TO MEET A RURAL MISSION

Michael R. Carrell, D.B.A.
Dean, College of Business
Combs 214
Morehead State University
Morehead, KY 40351
Voice and Voice Mail: 606-783-5158
Fax: 606-783-5025

Rosemary Carlson, D.B.A.
Professor of Finance
College of Business
UPO 707, Combs 208A
Morehead State University
Morehead, KY 40351
Voice and Voice Mail: 606-783-2777
Fax: 606-783-5025

ED 431 386

- Introduction
- The MBA Program
- The DL Delivery Methods
- Outcome Assessment Results
- Summary
- References

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. Lea

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Using Distance Learning to Meet a Rural Mission

Introduction

Countries like Australia and Canada, which have populations that are geographically diverse and isolated, have incorporated the use of distance learning methods into their university systems for a number of years. The use of distance learning in these situations has made access to higher education a reality for persons in areas which are geographically isolated and universities may be located at a significant distance. Distance learning is now becoming a widely accepted and viable program delivery system in the United States as well. Distance learning may be particularly useful to a regional university with a rural mission.

Wade and Riedling (1997) discuss Kentucky's involvement in distance education to date. Kentucky's involvement in distance learning dates back to the advent of Kentucky Educational Television in 1978. Over the years, universities in Kentucky became more involved in distance education by utilizing interactive television through a variety of networks established between universities and off-campus sites. During the 1995-96 school year, a wide network of interactive two-way audio and video television (compressed video) courses were available from a variety of Kentucky colleges. Gradually, computer-mediated communication has begun to become part of Kentucky's distance learning network. Instructors are increasingly using email, voice mail, fax, telephone, and Bulletin Board Services to communicate with students. Computer-mediated course work -- offering courses online over the Internet - is starting to be adopted by some Kentucky institutions with Morehead State University leading the way with this delivery method.

Morehead State University (MSU) is a state-supported university located in northeastern Kentucky. Its service area includes 22 rural counties in northern and eastern Kentucky, most in Appalachia. The service area is sparsely populated, with the largest population center only 40,000 residents (Ashland) and most towns with populations of 5,00020,000. The population in the service area is predominantly rural and small town, and our mission is to serve that population. In the past, students have had to drive long distances over curvy, mountainous terrain in order to receive an education. Many potential students were not able to receive an education because they could not come to campus due to work or family constraints. This was not an ideal situation for faculty nor students and did not

IR019517

provide an optimal learning environment. To better serve the region in 1995, MSU first considered offering programs via distance learning. Distance learning classes enable the university to reach students who could not otherwise take a college course, especially working professionals who could not travel 1-3 hours to campus from remote counties. It was decided that entire programs should be offered to best meet student needs, not just general education or randomly-selected courses. The four colleges (business, education, humanities, science and technology) considered which program might best utilize distance learning. In the College of Business, the MBA and BBA programs were considered. A survey was mailed to over 5,000 potential students in the region to determine their level of interest in distance learning programs and specifically an MBA or BBA program. The survey results showed a surprising high level of interest in both programs and a surprising1y high level of use of distance learning technology by business, medical, and governmental organizations in the region. Thus the need to educate and "sell" potential students on distance learning classes was not as great a problem as anticipated. In fact, few students have withdrawn from classes due to their dislike of the technology. The survey results also indicated students overwhelmingly wanted classes (1) one time per week; (2) Monday Thursday evenings, and Saturday mornings, or noon hours Monday-Thursday; (3) on a year round basis, not just Fall and Spring semesters. The interest in internet courses was also quite high.

Using the Internet to deliver on-line courses is fast moving to the forefront of distance learning delivery methods. Faculty can create an on-line environment for their students that is just as effective, and some say more effective, than the traditional classroom (Porter, 1997). Anecdotal evidence indicates, that in some cases, students enrolled in on-line classes surpass the performance of their counterparts in traditional classes (McCollum, 1997; Black 1997). Internet courses provide four major advantages over two-way audio/video (from our experiences) courses: (1) students can get on-line and learn at times and places convenient to them; (2) students must be "active"learners -they cannot sit in the back of a room and not participate; (3) the scheduling limitations imposed by two-way audio/video courses offered in special rooms is completely avoided; and (4) expense -assuming no PC cost to the university, the $100,000-$150,000 cost associated with two-way audio/video DL rooms is avoided as well as the cost of providing facilitators for the classes. The major disadvantages (again, based on our experiences) of internet classes are: (1) the lack of live face-to-face interaction does both some faculty and students; (2) students must be self-motivated and disciplined (which is true of most MBA students); and (3) spontaneous discussion is generally not as great as in traditional classrooms.

[TOP]

The MBA Program

The College of Business selected the MBA program to be offered via distance, learning and not the BBA for several reasons:

1. the students are more mature and self-motivated and thus likely to adopt more easily to DL technologies;
2. the MBA program is much shorter (48 hours versus 128 hours); and
3. all of the courses and faculty in the MBA program are in the College of Business v. only fifty percent of the BBA, thus the scheduling of courses is easier.

The university selected four programs for DL based on the perceived needs of the region and likely enrollment. The programs selected were nursing (BA), education (BA), education (MA), and the MBA program. All four have been successfully taught with compressed video technology, only the MBA program has also utilized internet DL technology. After selecting the four programs, a two-year schedule of courses was developed and all faculty who volunteered to teach in the programs were required to complete a two week summer training program before they taught a DL course. Faculty were trained in (1) use of the technology; (2) pedagogy alternatives; and (3) the basic "Do's and Don'ts of DL. " A summary of these basic "Do's and Don'ts, " which have been developed by several faculty after teaching about 75 DL courses, is presented in Figures 1 and 2. Successful DL-faculty and trainers from several schools were contacted in the development of the training program. Faculty when teaching any DL MBA course were given double work-load credit for the first, third and fifth times they taught a DL course during the first two years of the program. The compressed video classes are assigned a staff facilitator at each off-campus site to operate the equipment, give exams, hand out copies, etc.

Figure 1:

DISTANCE LEARNING TWO-WAY VIDEO/AUDIO DO'S AND DON'TS

1. Do determine the best seating arrangement and use camera pre-sets. Set all students in the front rows and together.

2. Do have all students learn e-mail the first week and use it every week for assignments, homework, tips, etc.

3. Do experiment with moving around the room yourself.

4. Do make it clear to each facilitator your expectations: stay up front during the entire class, be ready to move the camera.

5. Do get students up front on camera, using the document camera, PowerPoint every week.

6. Do visit the off-campus sites at least once early in the semester. An alternative is to have those students come to campus at least once.

7. Don't use fonts on PowerPoint or other smaller than 36.

8. Don't forget to call on each student each week. Expect them to be ready to take a quiz, discuss a case, etc., to be ready!

9. Don't lecture more than absolutely necessary.

10. Don't forget to have a plan for your absence, student absence, technical problems on the syllabus.

MOST IMPORTANT

11. Do use active learning techniques as often as possible!

Figure 2:

DISTANCE LEARNING INTERNET DO'S AND DON'TS

1. Do require email address, skills before class starts.

2. Do use listserv mailing list.

3. Do post lecture material on Web page (without HTML code).

4. Do allow "double-credit" for developing class.

5. Don't wait until exam time to determine method: open book or secure sites.

6. Don't require everyone to be on-line at the same time.

7. Don't limit the technology! Require students to find information on the Web. Start them with a list of sites.

8. Do include as a course objective: internet research skills.

9. Do REQUIRE DISCUSSION, get to know the students. Require students to evaluate each other, work in teams.

[TOP]

The DL Delivery Methods

The College of Business today offers the entire MBA program with distance learning (DL) technology through two delivery methods: two-way interactive audio/video courses and on-line courses offered over the Internet. In order for students to take college courses, they need only drive to one of several off-campus centers to participate in the two-way interactive courses. The centers are usually much more convenient than driving to campus. They are located in (a) high schools, (b) centers owned by MSU, or (c) private or nonprofit organizations. Each is similar to a traditional classroom which seats 8-40 students with three cameras, two large monitors, microphones at each desk, and computers. The instructor can teach a class for one to seven off-campus centers at the same time using this delivery method. The second delivery method is teaching courses over the Internet. In 1996, Morehead State University was the first in the state of Kentucky to offer on-line MBA courses over the Internet. Taking such a course requires only that a student have a personal computer, a modem, and an Internet Service Provider. Students may use home computers, office computers, or the computers at our off-campus centers to successfully further their education.

In the first two years the distance learning MBA program experienced a significant enrollment increase (146%) and have overall received a very positive student response to distance learning courses, as reflected by course evaluations administered by our Office of Distance Learning. Distance learning courses provide an active and collaborative learning experience for students and allows geographically isolated students to interact with different students from other areas. For rural-mission programs a significant problem is the cancellation of low-enrolled classes. Thus, it is quite significant that 80% of the DL MBA classes would have been canceled in past years due to low enrollment, however by combining several sites with 2-12 students per site into one section they can be offered. Distance learning also keeps our faculty closer to campus and avoid several hours on the road per week traveling to sites. As a result, distance learning is proving to be a viable method to provide quality educational programs within a rural mission.

[TOP]

Outcome Assessment Results

The MSU Office of Distance Learning developed and administered a distance learning survey which is given to all MBA students in addition to the normal student evaluation. The general purpose of the DL survey is to evaluate students' perceptives of compressed video courses compared to traditional classrooms. The results from ten different MBA courses over four semesters produced some interesting results, as reported in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Compressed Video
Outcome Assessment Results

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A. "Is a Distance Learning Classroom a Good Way to Learn?" Yes 76% No 20 %	F. "Does Your Mind Wander Easier in a DL Classroom?" Strongly Agree 17% Agree 32% Disagree 21% Strongly Disagree 15% Not Applicable 13%
B. "Was the Course Offered at a Convenient Time?" Strongly Agree 39% Agree 50% Disagree 4% Strongly Disagree 1%	G. "Tests/Quizzes About the Same as a DL Classroom." Much Easier 4% Somewhat Easier 7% The Same 71% Somewhat Harder 11% Much Harder 6.7%
C. "Was there Adequate Resources for Instruction?" Strongly Agree 36% Agree 52% Disagree 5% Strongly Disagree 1%	H. "Instruction: DL vs. Traditional Classroom" Much Easier 5% Somewhat Easier 7% The Same 70% Somewhat Harder 15% Much Harder 3%
D. "Was there Adequate Library Resources?" Strongly Agree 11% Agree 14% Disagree 17% Strongly Disagree 19% Not Applicable 37%	I. "Ability to Ask Questions in DL vs. Traditional Classroom." Much Easier 1% Somewhat Easier 4% The Same 40% Somewhat Harder 40% Much Harder 15%
E. "Organization of the Distance Learning Course Equal to a Traditional Classroom?" Strongly Agree 15% Agree 25% Disagree 22% Strongly Disagree 17% Not Applicable 19%	

Overall, the results were positive and led the faculty to the conclusion that compressed video can be effectively used to deliver a quality MBA program. When asked why they liked the DL course, the overwhelming response from students was convenience of location and time, which of course was expected. The answers reported in Figure 3 also indicate they believe DL compressed video classrooms are a good way to learn (76%); testing is about the same as in a traditional classroom (71%); and instruction is about the same (70%). However, the survey also uncovered problems which can be addressed through faculty development and training. The problems included the organization of the class in general (39% saw a problem) which can be addressed by faculty and the facilitators; students minds wandering (49%) which occurs most often if faculty do not utilize active learning techniques involving all sites -- not just the "live" students in front of them; and the inability to easily ask questions (55%)

which also can be addressed through faculty active learning techniques. The answers to these problem areas did vary significantly from instructor to instructor -- not unlike traditional classrooms.

Outcome assessment results for three Internet classes offered also yielded positive student perceptions as presented in Figure 4.

The survey results for the Internet courses are also generally quite positive. Students feel that on-line courses are a good way to learn (72.7%) while they also make higher education more convenient and accessible. In general, the results indicate that Internet courses require a comparable amount of studying to the traditional class (63.6%) while exams are approximately the same (81.8%) as are assignments (72.7%). In addition, it seems that students do not feel, in general, that a computer class should necessarily be a requirement before an on-line course is taken. No real problems were isolated by these survey results. All students did not feel that assignments were graded as quickly as they might be (18.2%) and approximately 36% felt that lessons could be better organized.

[TOP]

Summary

Based on the results of the assessment surveys for both the compressed video and Internet courses, students are, in general, satisfied with both the technology and the quality of learning. In summary, we can say that Morehead State University's commitment to serving our students through offering the Master of Business Administration program via distance learning is, at least in the early stages, a successful venture.

Figure 4

Internet Outcome

Assessment Results

A. "Lessons Over the Internet Seemed Organized?" Strongly Agree 18.2% Agree 36.4 % Disagree 18.2% Strongly Disagree 18.2%	G. "Virtual Class Good Way to Learn?" Much Easier 72.7 % Somewhat Easier 18.2%
B. "Assignments Were Promptly Graded?" Strongly Agree 18.2% Agree 63.6% Disagree 18.2%	H. "Compared to Normal, DL Assignments ... ?" Somewhat Easier 9.1% The Same 72.7% Somewhat Harder 9.1%
C. "Student Had the computer Experience Necessary?" Strongly Agree 63.6% Agree 27.3% Disagree 9.1 %	I. "Compared to Normal, DL Studying ?" Much Easier 9.1% Somewhat Easier 9.1% The Same 63.6% Somewhat Harder 9.1% Much Harder 9.1%
D. "Computer Did Not Make the Class Hard?" Strongly Agree 27.3% Agree 45.5% Not Applicable 27.3%	J. "Compared to Normal, DL Exams ?" Somewhat Easier 9.1% The Same 81.8% Somewhat Harder 9.1%
E. "Worked On Course From Home Computer?" Strongly Agree 63.6%	K. "Compared to Normal, DL Questions ?" The Same 36.4% Somewhat Harder 45.5% Much Harder 18.2%
F. "Computer Course Should be Required?" Strongly Agree 9.1% Agree 18.2% Disagree 27.3% Strongly Disagree 36.4% Not Applicable 9.1%	

References

Black, Jane. (1997). "On-line Students Fare Better." http://www.news.com/News/Item/.

McCollum, Kelly. (1997). "In Test, Students Taught On-Line Outdo Those Taught in Class." The Chronicle of Higher Education, February 21.

Porter, Lynette. Creating the Virtual Classroom: Distance Learning With the Internet. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997.

Wade, William and Ann Riedling. (1997). "Distance Learning: A Kentucky Perspective." http: //usdla2. org/edonline/Research. htm.

[TOP]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE